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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 27 November 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. ALSTON

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS (agenda item 7)

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Afghanistan (E/1990/5/Add.8 and E/1984/6/Add.12; E/C.12/WG/1991/CRP.1) (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Amani and Mr. Wahidi (Afghanistan) took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. WAHIDI (Afghanistan) said that the basic rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of Afghanistan were in complete conformity with the Covenants and also with the Koran. For example, the latter clearly stated that a person was innocent until proved guilty. Legislative bodies were bound to observe the tenets of Islam: article 2 of the Constitution stated that Islam was the religion of Afghanistan and that no law should run counter to it.

3. Turning to the question of the Afghan concept of the family, he said that the entire range of family issues was covered comprehensively in the Civil Code, particularly in articles 56 to 336. He referred specifically to article 60 defining marriage as a legitimate life partnership to found a family and setting out the rights and duties of each spouse. Article 66 stated that the marriage contract must be preceded by a public proposal and acceptance and that selection of a life partner was a voluntary act. Article 70 laid down the minimum age for matrimony, 18 for a man and 16 for a woman. Other articles dealt with arrangements for dowries, support, grounds for separation and divorce, irregular marriages, legal guardianship of children, support of parents and management of property.

4. With regard to the religious breakdown of the population, over 99 per cent were followers of Islam. Sunnis constituted 80 per cent of the population, Shiites 18 per cent and Ismaili Muslims and other sects 2 per cent.

5. The Government operated a housing programme through the Ministry of Housing which was also responsible for road construction. Every Ministry had a commission to allocate blocks of housing to their employees. Furthermore, on petition, government employees might be given land for building and had access to bank loans on easy terms or in some cases to interest-free government loans. The law protected the rights of tenants. The Government had established a Ministry for Reconstruction and Rural Development, which also dealt with the problem of emigrants.

6. A question had been asked about the right of peaceful assembly and the right to strike and when that might be forbidden in the public interest. The answer was that such acts were forbidden whenever the public interest was threatened, as for example, by an action contrary to the unity of the country. No cases of AIDS had been reported in Afghanistan, but a group of experts were looking into the problem.

7. Finally, in response to the question about domestic and foreign investment, he said that a law had recently been promulgated, on the basis of a draft prepared by the United Nations, which provided for investment in the private sector by natural and legal persons and the holding of shares by national and foreign investors and by joint ventures. An English translation of the text was available to the members of the Committee.

8. Mr. AMANI (Afghanistan) said that the Republic of Afghanistan was a free united non-aligned State which exercised sovereignty over the major part of its territory. The sovereignty of the people was exercised through the Loya Jirgah (the Great Assembly) and Parliament. The President of the Republic was elected by the Loya Jirgah, which also adopted the Constitution. Afghanistan was a member of the United Nations and had diplomatic relations with over 84 countries.

9. There were substantial foundations for a political solution in Afghanistan, namely, the Geneva Agreements signed in April 1988 between Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the five-point peace plan proposed by the United Nations Secretary-General on 21 May 1991 and the joint Soviet-United States declaration regarding the halting of arms deliveries to the two sides in the Afghan conflict, the restoration of peace in Afghanistan and the end of foreign intervention in its domestic affairs, thus leaving Afghans to talk among themselves to find a solution to their problems. There had also been the principle of national reconciliation with the aim of achieving an immediate cease-fire, the renunciation of the armed struggle, the beginning of a dialogue among Afghans, the formation of a transitional Government, the holding of free legislative elections, fair representation in the political structure and economic life, a general amnesty and guarantee of immunity for previous political activity, safeguarding and strengthening of national, historic and cultural values and traditions, together with respect for Islam in order to ensure a stable and lasting peace.

10. Turning to the question of refugees, he said that even before the war one million Afghans had been working in Iran and the Arab States and there had been two and a half million nomads on the Afghan-Pakistan border. The coming of war had blocked them on the far side of the frontier. The refugee problem was a very complex issue which could not be discussed in simple terms. A separate written report could be provided on the subject. UNHCR also had relevant facts and figures. The Government had done its utmost to simplify the return of refugees: reception centres had been established in the towns near the Pakistan and Iranian borders. Decrees had been published guaranteeing returnees all their rights, including the return of property, reinstatement in jobs and the placing of children in educational institutions. He added that every time there was an influx of refugees, the Afghan opposition made difficulties and rockets were aimed at the towns where the centres for returnees were located.

11. With regard to the Islamization of Afghanistan, he said that religion was the constitutional and ideological basis for 99 per cent of the population. The Government's attitude to Islam was clearly set out in articles 2 and 40 of the country's Constitution. The Ministry for Islamic Affairs had been established in 1980 to settle religious issues and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs had been constituted in 1983. Several schools and Medersas and the Centre for Islamic Studies were currently working in Afghanistan to

develop and enrich Islamic culture and science. The State maintained 16,897 mosques throughout the country; 245 new mosques had been built over the preceding eight years by the State and many others were in course of construction. In brief, freedom to worship was guaranteed to all Muslims in Afghanistan. Furthermore, after his election by the Loya Jirgah, the President took the following oath: "In the name of the Almighty, I swear to uphold the fundamental principles of the holy religion of Islam ...". Afghanistan as a whole was a Muslim country, there was no need for further Islamization.

12. Mr. ALVAREZ VITA said that he had expressed concern about the people's exercise of their basic right to self-determination, in view of the fact that there were 5 million refugees outside Afghanistan. He had been disappointed to note that there had been no suggestion that the matter might be given further consideration.

13. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO recalled that he had asked a question about the legal status of the former King of Afghanistan, whether he could return to his country and what the implications would be on the political situation there.

14. Mr. MUTERAHUJU recalled that he had asked questions about the inheritance rights of boys and girls and the relative importance of public and private education. He wished to know the causes of and proposed remedies for discrimination between the sexes and between conditions in towns and in the countryside.

15. The CHAIRMAN requested members of the Committee not to repeat questions which they had already asked and which they must assume had been recorded.

16. Mr. AMANI (Afghanistan) said in response to Mr. Alvarez Vita's comment that the arrangements were in keeping with the spirit of the Geneva Agreements and the Secretary-General's five-point peace plan. Free general elections would be held with the participation of all parties and all political and social groups. His country had accepted that plan and had signed agreements with Pakistan for the return of refugees. A Joint Council had been set up to coordinate that work and Afghanistan had made preparations for the elections under the auspices of the United Nations and of the Islamic Conference. If there continued to be obstacles, they came from intervention by other countries. With regard to the role of the King, he said that the latter would always be welcome back to help in the peace process. It was up to the people to decide on his role after the free elections had been held.

17. Mr. WAHIDI (Afghanistan), replying to the question on the rights of inheritance of sons and daughters respectively, explained that under Islamic law the estate of a deceased person was shared by the sons and daughters, the share of each daughter being as to one half of the share inherited by each son.

18. In reply to the question about schools for boys and girls, he explained that there was no difference in the subjects taught. Most schools were co-educational; in some remote areas there were separate schools for boys and girls, but there was no difference in the curriculum. There was similarly no difference in curriculum between rural schools and town schools.

19. There was a shortage of schools in some areas of the country as a result of 13 years of war and of the resulting conditions, which meant that those areas were outside the control of the Government.

20. Private schools existed side by side with the public education system. In the latter, education was free of charge from kindergarten to high school and even at university level; students received also monthly allowances and dormitories were provided for students coming from the provinces.

21. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had concluded its consideration of the reports submitted by Afghanistan. He thanked the Vice-Minister of Justice and the representatives of Afghanistan for their participation.

22. Mr. Amani and Mr. Wahidi (Afghanistan) withdrew.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (E/1988/5/Add.6; E/C.12/WG/1991/CRP.3)

23. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ri Tcheul (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) took a place at the Committee table.

24. Mr. RI Tcheul (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), introducing his country's initial report (E/1988/5/Add.6), said that, for a better understanding of that report, he would give a brief account of his country's history.

25. The Korean people had lived on the Korean peninsula for some 5,000 years in harmony as a homogeneous nation, speaking a single language, with the same customs and national culture. His people's ancestors had many cultural achievements to their credit, including the earliest metal printing characters in world history.

26. In 1910, however, the Korean nation had been subjected to Japanese colonialism. Under the leadership of President Kim Il Sung, the Korean people had conducted a resolute anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle over a period of 20 years for the independence of the country. The country had been liberated, but the people had been in a situation of cultural backwardness as a result of the Japanese colonial domination. Furthermore, the division of the country by outside forces had created obstacles to national progress in general. Despite those difficult conditions, the Government, from the outset of the country's liberation, had considered education, science, technology and culture as an integral part of the construction of a new society and had taken momentous steps for their development. Those measures had made it possible to overcome the cultural backwardness inherited from the old society and to enable the people to enjoy fully its cultural rights.

27. He would furnish additional replies to the written questions concerning the application of the rights covered by articles 13 to 15 of the Covenant. In doing so, he would endeavour to avoid any duplication with the contents of his country's initial report.

28. The right to education was guaranteed by the Socialist Constitution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, article 59 which specified that every citizen had the right to free and compulsory education. Particulars

on the legislation and regulations enacted to implement those constitutional provisions had been given in the written replies which had been filed with the Secretariat of the Committee and were available for consultation.

29. Shortly after the liberation of the country, a democratic system of education had been instituted. Compulsory primary education for all had been established in 1956; in 1958, secondary education had become compulsory for all and in 1967 the universal nine-year technical education had also been made compulsory. Since 1972, compulsory education had been free, extending over 11 years (one year of pre-school education, four years' primary and six years' secondary education), so that all school-age children had benefited from that system since 1975.

30. Side by side with that system of free and compulsory education over a span of 11 years, a separate system of studying on the job existed for persons in employment.

31. The right to education applied not only to all citizens without distinction of sex or age but also to the children of non-nationals, if the latter so wished.

32. In 1990, the country had 270 universities, 469 specialized high schools, 4,849 secondary schools and 4,813 primary schools, providing education to one quarter of the total population.

33. Despite the country's limited resources and the many demands on the State finances, 18 per cent of the budget was allocated to education and culture. The State offered students textbooks, supplies and equipment, travel, uniforms, accommodation and food for boarders, free medical care and fellowships.

34. In the general education system, there were 30 to 35 children to a class; in higher education institutions, the average number was 20 students. There were also special schools for orphans, the blind and the deaf and dumb.

35. Schools were located geographically so that children did not have to travel from home more than 1 kilometre to kindergarten, 2 kilometres to primary school or 4 kilometres to secondary school. There were special school bus or train facilities for children living in remote places.

36. Parents had the right freely to choose the school to which they would send their children. They kept in close touch with teachers at meetings held at least twice every term; those meetings enabled them to follow the progress being made by their children, and become familiar with their aptitudes, their relations with schoolmates and their plans for a future career.

37. Parents had the opportunity to ensure that their children received a religious education. Article 54 of the Constitution guaranteed the right of all citizens to freedom of religious belief. Parents, accompanied by their children, attended a church, cathedral or Buddhist temple in accordance with their own convictions. They could send their children to the School of Theology, where a six-year course was provided by the religious organizations and to the Religions Section of the Kim Il Sung University.

38. Great care had been taken by the State to ensure that theoretical education was closely associated with practical training in its various forms. Schoolchildren had thus assimilated the knowledge they acquired in practical work and laboratory experiments at school and through group periods of training in factories and other production units. Those students who benefited from the system of studying the job thus mastered, without any absence from productive work, the scientific and technical principles which they learned in their theoretical courses.

39. Outside the schoolroom, children engaged in sports and artistic activities, participated in literary, scientific and other clubs and took part in visits to factories and other places of interest. In every province, there was a "Children's Palace" and a "Children's House" in every district; the funds annually allocated thereto amounted to 140 million won.

40. The main objectives of the country's school system was to ensure that the new generation had a high moral sense, a good education and enjoyed physical fitness. Accordingly, physical culture was an important subject in the school curriculum and accounted for 8.5 per cent of the programme at the primary level, 4.7 per cent at the secondary level and 1.5 per cent at the university level. There were no physical education classes during school holidays, when children took part in varied sports activities.

41. Turning to the rights mentioned in article 15 of the Covenant, he explained that those rights were guaranteed in his country by articles 51 and 60 of the Constitution which specified that all citizens were equal in all areas of the life of the State and society: political, economic, cultural, etc. The freedom of all citizens to engage in scientific, literary and artistic activities was guaranteed and State support was provided for innovators and inventors. Lastly, the Constitution specified that copyright and invention patents were protected by the law.

42. The Government's concern for education, science, technology and culture was based on the ideas derived from the basic principle of Juche. That principle meant placing human beings at the centre of all concerns and making the service of mankind the focal centre of all activities. It meant seeking the solution for all the problems of the revolution and reconstruction in the light of the country's situation and its people's interests. That approach had proved all the more important because the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was surrounded by bigger countries where subservience to great Powers was the watchword with the consequent dogmatic tendency to serve and imitate them slavishly and en bloc.

43. On the basis of those principles, the Government had given pre-eminence to education, culture, science and technology, to maintaining national traditions, preserving the country's excellent national heritage, and adapting to its situation and to its people's interests and feelings the scientific and technical achievements of other countries, instead of mechanically introducing them. No attempt, however, was being made to limit the exercise of citizens' rights and freedoms in the matter or to reject the sciences, technology and advanced culture of other countries. The Constitution guaranteed freedom for scientific, literary and artistic activities. Scientific, technical and cultural exchanges with other countries took place under the relevant legislation, regulations and decisions.

44. The Ministry of Culture was in charge of administrative organization and direction of the work of literary and artistic creation, with the active cooperation of such country-wide organizations as the Union of Writers and Artists, the Musicians' Union, the Actors' Union and the Dancers' Unions.

45. In that connection, the Government and the Party had set guidelines for the cultural development of the country so as to reflect the wishes, needs and interests of the people and to mobilize the masses to put those guidelines into practice.

46. Article 45, paragraph 2, of the Constitution specified that the State must encourage the creative activities of writers and artists and promote the involvement of the masses, and in particular workers and peasants, in literary and artistic activities. Artistic and literary groups had been organized and were very active wherever people lived and worked; cultural activities were centred on theatres, cinemas, cultural centres and other institutions spread throughout the country.

47. In 1987, there were 35 theatres and 5,121 cinemas uniformly distributed by distict, neighbourhood, workers' surburb down to the local administrative unit known as "Ri". There was a cultural centre at every factory, enterprise or cooperative farm. The price of a theatre ticket was 2 won (one-fiftieth of the average salary) and a cinema ticket cost 20 djeun (one five-hundredth of the average salary). Foreign films were shown mainly through television; every Saturday and Sunday foreign plays and world masterpieces were shown on television.

48. An "April Spring Artistic Festival" was held annually in which well-known artists of over 100 countries from all regions of the world showed their artistic creations. Under cultural exchange schemes, companies from 8 to 10 countries on an average visited the country every year. The national company visited some 50 foreign countries every year. The National Symphony Orchestra was also active.

49. With the progress in the construction of a new society, the need for publications had increased. There were over 480 newspapers of all kinds with a total circulation of over 3,100,000. Forty of them were produced in the capital. Over 1,800 books were published annually, the number of copies printed per book being of the order of 150,000. The number of foreign books published amounted to over 500.

50. With a view to the rapid development of science and technology in various fields, the Government had adopted various regulations governing the dissemination of scientific and technical information, inventions and innovations, and such matters as scientific and technical exchanges with foreign countries.

51. The National Committee for Science and Technology, the Educational Committee, the Academy of Sciences and other public bodies had set up centres in the towns and provinces as well as in the more important centres where scientific and technological books were kept and to which scientific theses were sent, as well as reports of inventions, innovations and other achievements by national scientists as well as documentation on patents from other countries.

52. A computerized scientific and technological information centre had been set up, as had a centre for information on patents, housed in the Palace of People's Studies, which served as a centre for the popularization of science and technology.

53. Over 180 cooperation agreements in the fields of science and education had been concluded with 68 countries, providing for exchanges of lecturers, researchers and experts and participation in international training courses and seminars.

54. Honorary distinctions and financial rewards were conferred upon inventors and innovators. Articles 24 and 26 of the copyright rules entitled an author of a work to receive payment and to designate a person to protect his copyright. The material interests resulting from any scientific, technological, educational, literary or artistic production were protected by copyright legislation.

55. In conclusion, he assured the Committee of his cooperation in ensuring that its questions would be duly answered, and that the rights provided for in the Covenant would be implemented and guaranteed to an even greater extent with economic growth and further advances in science and technology in his country.

56. Mr. NENEMAN said that the actual situation prevailing in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was difficult to ascertain from the often sweeping statements made in the report. He would appreciate specific information on the inevitable difficulties encountered in any country in ensuring the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights. With reference to the statement in the report that everyone freely exercised genuine freedom, he asked whether citizens enjoyed freedom of movement, free choice of work, freedom of expression without fear of punishment and freedom of religion.

57. With reference to article 13 of the Covenant, it was clear that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was a country in which education was widespread and easily accessible. However, he questioned the statement in paragraph 7 of the report that President Kim Il Sung's thesis gave "perfect answers to all theoretical and practical problems arising in education". Having been a delegate to UNESCO for a number of years, he was aware that approaches to education were constantly evolving and that there were no perfect answers. He asked whether Korean teachers were able to compare their work with that of other teachers, and whether they could go abroad and see for themselves how other education systems functioned. The provision of compulsory pre-school education, referred to in paragraph 16 of the report, raised the question of freedom of parents' choice in deciding whether they wished their children to attend school at an early age.

58. The reference to State encouragement to writers written into the Constitution and quoted in paragraph 77 of the report prompted him to ask whether writers, for their part, could encourage the State to be less dominating and leave room for free and different ideas and privacy.

59. Referring to the impressive number of theatres and cinemas in the country, he asked what kind of material was produced and shown in theatres and cinemas and on television, whether it was only locally produced material or whether, for instance, the people had the opportunity to see world classics or foreign works of universally recognized quality.

60. Although it was certainly useful for all scientists' material necessities to be provided for, including food, clothing and housing (para. 106), he wondered whether that did not place restrictions on their freedom of choice.

61. In conclusion, he said that he did not wish his questions to be misconstrued. He was not passing judgement and fully appreciated that the approach adopted in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was a different one and was perhaps not incompatible with the Covenant. However, the Committee required factual information in order to assess the real situation.

62. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAM agreed with Mr. Neneman that it was difficult to form a clear picture of the society of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. She was most impressed by the amount of State support for education, including subsidies for students, but wondered whether no difficulties were encountered in providing such financial support. She had also noted the strong encouragement given to physical culture. Since physical education was a major subject in schools, were alternative programmes available for disabled persons?

63. Drawing attention to paragraph 37 of the report concerning girl pupils, she asked what was meant by their "family responsibilities" and "women's occupations".

64. She wished to know whether foreign publications were available to Korean students and, in addition to the periodic artistic festivals mentioned by the representative of the Government, whether art works from foreign countries were exhibited regularly. Were grants or scholarships available for study in foreign countries and did foreigners have access to Korean schools?

65. How and by whom was the curriculum monitored and evaluated? By what means could it be ascertained whether it was successful or to what extent it needed improvement and refinement? Finally, she requested the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to elaborate on the term "cultural backwardness" which he had used in his oral statement.

66. Mr. KOUZNETSOV said that, although he had no first-hand knowledge of the country, he had heard a great deal about its considerable achievements, especially in education. However, no country was entirely problem-free, and he would welcome further information on any problems encountered and how the Government was dealing with them, if only for the practical purpose of exchanging experience with other countries such as his own. He drew attention in that connection to paragraph 5 of the list of issues drawn up by the pre-sessional working group (E/C.12/WG/1991/CRP.3).

67. Mr. MRATCHKOV said that he, too, would welcome details on the practical application of the Covenant.

68. Referring to article 40 of the Constitution, quoted in paragraph 10 of the report, he requested further information on what was meant by the statement that the State was "giving precedence to public education" - "éducation de la collectivité" in the French version - since article 13 of the Covenant enshrined the right to education as a right of the individual.

69. With reference to paragraphs 13 and 15 of the report, he questioned the merits of making secondary education compulsory. Not all individuals were equal in terms of their aptitudes and ability to complete secondary education successfully and he wondered whether the very purpose of secondary education might not suffer if it were an obligation rather than a right. He also asked what was meant by "monolithic education" (para. 17) and whether individuals' personal aptitudes and preferences were taken into account. On the subject of higher education, he wished to know whether admission to universities was subject to a competitive entrance examination or other criteria and whether opportunities existed for meeting the wishes of all students to pursue higher education. Were any figures available on the number of scholarships awarded and what were the criteria for granting them? Finally, he would welcome information on the status of teachers and in particular on their salaries and working conditions.

70. Mr. KONATE asked what was meant, concretely, by the Juche philosophical outlook on which all policies in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were based. Clarification of that concept would give the Committee a deeper insight into the whole approach to the education system in the country. Quoting paragraph 1 of article 13 of the Covenant which outlined the accepted philosophical bases of education, he wished to know whether the Juche approach was compatible with article 13.

71. The Committee applauded the extent of State support and responsibility for cultural activities. He wondered, however, whether there were any cultural activities other than those organized by the State and the Party and whether citizens were free to engage in such activities or other manifestations of a different culture. Not only would he concur with Mr. Neneman in asking whether there was free access to foreign films, such as African films, and other forms of creative expression, but, looking at the diffusion of science and culture from another angle, he wished to know whether individuals and others were not victims of censorship and strictly regulated methods of diffusion.

72. Mrs. IDER, referring to the question asked in paragraph 17 of the list of issues drawn up by the working group, asked whether it was possible to establish private educational institutions at any level and, if so, whether any such institutions existed. If not, did the population display any interest in establishing such schools?

73. With reference to the question asked in paragraph 21 of the list of issues, she wished to know who decided on curricula and programmes in primary, secondary and higher educational institutions and what was the regular procedure for curriculum design? What was the ratio of female to male students in primary, secondary and higher educational institutions, and were women barred from any professions, preventing female students from studying the relevant subjects at the higher education level?

74. On the question of access to foreign culture, she pointed out that one basic aim of education was to provide access by the population to the world's civilization and cultural heritage. How was that aim reflected in educational programmes and textbooks?

75. On the protection of freedom of creative activity and artistic production, she asked whether it was possible for individuals dissenting from the Party line to have access to private publishing facilities. Finally, she sought clarification as to whether any structures other than the Party and the State were involved in running the country's cultural life.

76. Mr. FOFANA asked whether any private educational system existed, in parallel with the State education system. He also asked for fuller information regarding the extremely low rate of illiteracy in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

77. Mr. SPARSIS also wondered what was meant by the term "monolithic" educational system. Furthermore, since the system was targetted at "all new generations", was it ever reviewed or revised, and if so, how often and by whom?

78. Turning to paragraph 20 of the report, he noted that the criteria used to determine eligibility for higher education were highly subjective. Did any objective criteria exist for admission to higher education? If so, what were those criteria, by whom were they applied, and did those concerned have any opportunity to appeal if they did not agree with the decision reached?

79. Turning to paragraphs 51 to 57 of the report, he noted the omnipresence of the State in the development of the school system. Were there any other participants in that process, such as parents, students, religious groups or teachers? Or was the system devised and prepared by the State purely in the light of its own views of what citizens needed from the system?

80. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO raised the general question of the attitude of the authorities in the Democratic People's Repubic of Korea towards ethnic minorities, and asked how they were dealt with in the context of education and culture.

81. Mr. MARCHAN ROMERO drew attention to article 41 of the Constitution, cited in paragraph 10 of the report, which referred to young people under working age. Was any specific minimum working age stipulated in any legislation? He also asked for a rough indication of the value in current United States dollars of the amount referred to in paragraph 30 of the report. Lastly, he noted the stress placed throughout the report on the physical education of youth. Was there any link between physical training and military service? Was it possible for students to complete any part of their military service during the years of compulsory schooling? Were there any circumstances in which students could be called upon to perform military service while studying at university?

82. Mr. RATTRAY said that it was evident that significant advances had been made in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with regard to education and the provisions contained in articles 13 to 15 of the Covenant. The concerns

expressed in the Committee related to whether or not adequate freedom of choice existed within the system, especially where education was concerned. Article 13 was predicated on the belief that education was directed to securing the full development of the human personality; it therefore contained an intrinsic idea of diversity and choice; and must allow for the possibility of the human personality developing in an other-than-monolithic manner. Furthermore, freedom was essentially the free expression of a people's will. Was it the will of the people to have that particular system of education; and was the system allowing people to participate effectively in a free society, and promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations? Was there any real possibility of expressing dissenting views regarding the system of education.

83. He also wished to know whether the establishment of parallel systems of education, such as independent schools, was actively prohibited. Similarly, did any prohibitions exist where participation in cultural life and the enjoyment of the benefits of scientific research were concerned? Were alternative modes of expression permitted in the field of cultural and scientific activities, or did any deviation from the system constitute a violation, that might lead either to legal sanctions or to cultural or social ostracism? Lastly, did the system provide for religious education? If so, what form did it take? Were students free to choose whether or not to pursue religious education?

84. Mr. SIMMA, referring to paragraphs 1 and 2 of the report, said that the two paragraphs appeared to him irreconcilable, particularly in the light of the content of paragraph 7 of the report. If the theses of Comrade Kim Il Sung provided "perfect answers" to all educational problems, how was that compatible with "genuine freedom", in a world in which almost universal consensus now existed on the need for progress on the basis of trial and error?

85. He noted the very strong emphasis throughout the report on physical education. Was the principal purpose of physical education to ensure the health of the population, or did it have some paramilitary purpose? He also asked for clarification regarding restrictions on the freedom to educate youth in religions, and on material conditions with regard to religious education, both in State schools and in those run by religious communities.

86. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO referred to paragraph 20 of the report, and asked for some clarification of the meaning of the term "higher education" in that context. Reverting to the first question put by the pre-sessional working group, regarding developments since the preparation of the initial report, she pointed out that momentous events had taken place in the world since the preparation of that report in 1988. Had those events been reflected any opening-up in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea? Was there now, for example, any teaching of human rights and tolerance in schools, or any promotion of contacts with other countries?

87. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there were no further questions, the Committee's next task was to proceed to its consideration of the replies to be provided by the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It

was open to the delegation to choose to begin to respond in the short time available that afternoon, or else to postpone its replies until the following afternoon at around 4 p.m.

88. Mr. RI Tcheul (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) thanked members of the Committee for their questions, which testified to the great interest they showed in his country. He said that his delegation preferred to embark on its replies to the questions the following afternoon, and regretted that he would be unable to be present at that meeting, for reasons that were beyond his control.

89. Mr. Ri Tcheul (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) withdrew.

90. The CHAIRMAN, referring to the previous year's concluding observations on the initial report submitted by the Dominican Republic (E/1990/5/Add.4) drew attention to a letter dated 23 October 1991 from Ciudad Alternativa, a Dominican non-governmental organization, concerning alleged violations by the Dominican Government of the right to adequate housing. He suggested that the Committee should merely take note of the communication, stressing that such a course of action did not imply any endorsement of its contents.

91. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.